

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

THE MEANING
of the CROSS

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To
MY MOTHER

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*Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.*

—Tennyson.

I

FOREWORD

THE CHRISTIAN Church, in our day, is a prey to two misgivings. The first is that the Christian religion is losing its hold on the hearts of men, its potency as the transformer of motives and the guide of conduct. The second is that this decline in the value of the Christian religion is being induced, not so much by assaults from without, as by a failure in loyalty from within. Needless to say, the latter of these is, by far, the more serious.

The first misgiving has been expressed recently by Dr. F. J. Foakes-Jackson, who asserts of the religious systems that may be generally described as "Christianity" that "there is a growing conviction that Christianity can be ignored, and men are less and less troubled by religious doubts, not because they have ceased to doubt, but because they are hardly interested at all in the religious problem."* To the careful and candid observer of modern life there is so much

* "Christ and the Creeds"; *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1922, pp. 417-18.

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truth in this that misgiving, at least, seems justified.

The second misgiving, which refers the modern "indifference to the religious problem" to certain currents of thought and influence within Christianity itself, has been expressed, in a most winning, sympathetic and fair-minded manner by Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross.* One paragraph from Dr. Ross's pamphlet may be quoted as expressing the nature of this failure of the present generation to comprehend a fundamental element of the Christian faith. "For meanwhile the fact remains that that which was the vital centre of apostolic Christianity, the undeserved grace of God shown in the atoning Death and the mediation of the Eternal Son, is not the vital centre of much of the active religion of the day; that indeed the whole redemption idea is out of vogue, or accepted only in some altered sense; that the precipitate of much of the current Christian thinking is declaratory rather than redemptive, if I may put it thus; and they (that is, the older generation of Christian people) fear this, because a gospel which is declaratory only will not last; men will tire of it. For 'men see already with exasperating clearness what their duty is'; the trouble is that they

* "The Cross"; pub. Revell; p. 16.

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need complete adjustment to the sources of power for the performance of duty."

It savors of presumption for one to speak on behalf of the present generation of Christians, in reply to these two genuine misgivings of our day. One feels, however, a natural desire to say something in behalf of his own generation. First, then, with regard to the apparent ignoring of Christianity, the noted lack of "interest in the religious problem," one would reply that that depends entirely upon what one means by "the religious problem." If one means by it a particular view of the Universe and of Man's life therein, which concerns itself with resolving the problems of life by finally authoritative theological theories and dogmas, then it is quite true that men are everywhere indifferent to the religious problem. There is in the spiritual atmosphere of our day an independence of traditional creeds, religious rites and ecclesiastical customs which must be most disconcerting to the older generation.

But the present generation is not thinking of the religious problem in terms of existing religious systems. It regards religion rather as a quest for truth, than as an authoritative revelation thereof. It does not deny that the quest has discovered truth. But it does

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deny that it has discovered all truth, and maintains that all truth hitherto apprehended has been mixed with error. It is impatient, too, of the common habit of regarding the religious problem as distinct and separate from problems which are regarded by many as outside the purview of religion. It is inclined to insist that the religious problem embraces all problems. It regards religion as the mother of all the sciences. It tends to relegate dogmatism and ecclesiasticism, which decline to submit to the scientific conception of truth, to the position of usurping interlopers whose inordinate claim to the full interest of our religion must be denied. To many Christians of our day the religious problem is the quest for truth, immediate and ultimate, and the clothing of truth in appropriate human institutions. It is not enough for them that an idea should stand as truth within a religious system, even if it be shown to have value for those who accept the system. It must stand as truth in life itself, in the life that all men live, everywhere, all the time. In short, the religion of the rising generation is devoted to Fact. It believes that that which does not truly account for and beneficently control the visible and tangible cannot be trusted either in its account of, or in its re-

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lation to, the mysterious Force which underlies and produces them. It believes that Fact is the servant of Faith. It does not fail, moreover, to recognize that Faith based on Fact, is the servant of Truth.

There is no ground for pessimism over "indifference to the religious problem" so conceived. The present unrest itself proves that the critical faculties of Christendom have thriven. The Christian religion is not moribund. It is passing through a period of searching self-examination. From this it will emerge purified and revitalized and will gird itself afresh for battle with unholy Ignorance and Superstition and all their brood of Furies. One thing only can kill Christianity—its own cowardice; its failure to face the truth about itself and about the civilization it has produced.

Turning now to the second misgiving, one disagrees with the viewpoint of Dr. Ross, while honoring him and all for whom he undoubtedly speaks. One questions, first, the quoted statement that "men see already with exasperating clearness what their duty is." The present generation does not believe this, and finds grounds for its skepticism in the present clashing of contrary viewpoints on all sorts of problems. There is no unity of standards, for example, on the great ques-

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tions of human relationships in industry, commerce, politics or religion. There is, of course, a measure of intellectual agreement on the validity of certain great moral principles. But it is safe to say that, with all the good will in the world, men are now incapable of putting these moral principles into practice, as much because they cannot agree on how to do it as for lack of the will to do it.

Again, we are told that the trouble with us is that we "need complete adjustment to the sources of power for the performance of duty." These words were, it is only fair to say, penned before the war. One believes that it is quite possible Dr. Ross would alter them in view of events which have since transpired. The graves of the flower of the young manhood of Christendom, irrespective of the cause for which those who fill them died, silently and effectively refute the contention that the men of the present generation lack "power for the performance of duty." What is lacking is not so much power to do right as power to do what the leadership of the present order declares is right, which is a very different matter. The charge of failure in "power for the performance of duty" is levelled with justice only at those who, being in positions of leadership and influence, lack the sincerity and the will

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power to face squarely their duty to those they lead, and to do it.

Finally, one must say a word concerning the suggestion that the root of the trouble in the Christianity of the rising generation is its failure to appreciate the redemptive element in the work of Jesus. Dr. Ross speaks of the "atoning Death and the mediation of the Eternal Son," as "the vital centre of apostolic Christianity," and as the element which, to older Christians, seems lacking in the religion of to-day. Our religion, it is suggested, is declaratory "rather than redemptive."

This phase of the misgiving of our elders, we must admit, is, to a great extent, justified. Religion is, to-day, more declaratory than redemptive. And yet one must remember that the redemptive phase, even in the work of Jesus, was preceded by the declaratory. It may be possible that the declaratory phase of present day Christianity will, as most of us hope and believe, be followed by the redemptive. Moreover, the modern mind, having in view the terrible tragedies of its own day, is inclined to ask, "Why, if our fathers had the right conception of the redemptive or saving work of Jesus, has Christendom come to the present pass? Why was the world not saved?" The present genera-

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tion fought the War. It is inclined to believe that preceding generations made it. Hence, even the sacred dogma of Atonement must pass under the critical scrutiny of a generation that seeks for Truth from a basis of Fact.

Nevertheless, one may believe, as the writer does, that the Cross is still, not only the heart of Christianity, but the heart of human life. But the men of to-day must be allowed to find out for themselves how and why this is so. The present volume is not an attempt to state a doctrine of Atonement. It is a very modest and imperfect effort to broach the question from the standpoint of a considerable section of the present generation. The most extravagant hope of the writer is that he may assist in stimulating others, more capable of doing so, to restate in terms intelligible to the common man of our day the age-old conviction of Christendom that Jesus is the Saviour of the World.

II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

IT IS worth while to remind ourselves, as we begin an earnest and humble quest for the meaning of the Cross, that we may approach it from two different viewpoints, the historical and the dogmatic. Viewed historically, the Cross is a fact which involves the relationship of certain souls or personalities in a great spiritual struggle. Viewed dogmatically, it is the symbol of a dogma which purports to be the authoritative interpretation of that fact. Logically there can be no dispute about the priority or the close relationship of these viewpoints. The interpretation must be governed by the fact of which it is an explanation, and consequently the dogmatic view of the Cross must ever be logically dependent upon the historical view. We must understand the Cross of Calvary before we can benefit by the Cross of Christian symbolism.

It is, however, a fact which anyone may observe, that the average man, in his thinking about the Cross, ignores the logical re-

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lationship between these viewpoints, and takes as final the dogmatic or symbolical interpretation, without troubling himself much about the historical basis. That is to say, he is satisfied, on the historical side, with the assurance of the authenticity of the crucifixion of Jesus, and accepts, without question, the authoritative and dogmatic interpretation of the significance of the bare historical fact.

Now, if Dogma depends upon Fact, the Cross, as the symbol of a dogma, has no intrinsic meaning or value. These it derives from the part it played in a sequence of historical facts. These facts involved a struggle between spiritual forces, a clash of ideals and convictions, a contest between the mind and will and strength of Jesus of Nazareth and those of the dominant element in his own generation, the Jewish sacerdotalists and legalists. The meaning of the Cross, then, will unfold itself most truly to those who understand best, both intellectually and experimentally, the meaning of that struggle. And any dogma, evolved by later generations, which is not congruous with the principles and convictions for devotion to which Jesus suffered the Cross, can have no part in the authentic meaning thereof.

The above conclusions will appear in-

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creasingly important when we remember that for hundreds of years, now, the Cross has been presented to men as the symbol of the theological dogma of Atonement. The records of the historical fact have been searched and studied, not with the prime purpose of understanding the great event which took place on Calvary, but with the avowed object of substantiating this or that theological dogma concerning the Atonement. The great controversies in Christian thought have never raged about the establishment of any fact relating to the death of Jesus. They have always been differences of opinion about the significance of facts assumed as substantiated. For example, the system of Luther and the system of the Church from which he revolted both assumed, as a fact, that Jesus died on the Cross to placate an angry God, yet differed widely in the implications and systems they derived from it. And so down through the centuries the Cross has been preponderatingly a dogmatic symbol, the sign of certain types of opinion. It has been used for the dissemination and perpetuation of these, rather than as a signpost to point the enquirer backward to the historical event which alone gave it any significance whatever. As a symbol, it has been extremely

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valuable not only to the religious systems which have so made use of it, but also to human life and progress in the widest sense. For dogmatism and symbolism possess unique advantages as a means of communicating and perpetuating ideas. One does not desire to detract one whit from the possibilities of good that lie in the use of the Cross as a dogmatic symbol.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that there are dangerous possibilities in these things, which must be guarded against. There is first the danger of using a symbol to inculcate opinions that have no genuine basis in fact; that is, the danger of misinterpreting the original fact. Close upon the heels of this follows the danger that symbolical presentations, if they err in their interpretations of the original facts, may indeed for a long time pass unquestioned, only to come at last into conflict with some newly-discovered fact with which they cannot be reconciled. This danger is always doubly grave because it eventuates in deep distrust not only of elements of error, but also of elements of truth, in dogma. Finally, we must ever remember the tendency of the human mind to confuse the symbol with the reality it represents, to regard it as possessing intrinsic value. Coins, as we know, are but

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symbols of values which have been created by living spirit, brain and muscle. Yet long association with those values has tended to make coins objects of intrinsic value to all but the thoughtful.

When, therefore, we remember that for hundreds of years the Church has presented the Cross as a dogmatic symbol, and when we remember the obvious dangers to which the use of symbols is ever open, we may, perhaps, be able to understand better the difficulties in which the Church finds itself to-day. These difficulties are such as to suggest that all the dangerous possibilities of dogmatism and symbolism have had a part in producing a situation which year by year grows more impossible.

Let us look at the danger last mentioned above, namely, that of confusing symbol with reality, of thinking that the symbol is in itself intrinsically valuable. Surely the Church, in all its branches, may be said to suffer from that mistake to-day, not merely with regard to the Cross, but with regard to the whole visible structure of organized religion. The rampant ecclesiasticism of our day is a case in point. That which is regarded in the world as the visible expression of the Spirit of the Carpenter of Nazareth, who had not where to lay his head, has be-

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come the greatest property holder in Christendom, and glories in the fact. That which represents visibly in the world of our day the spirit of Him who loved even His enemies, is engaged in intrigue within itself, prey to internal jealousies, yea and even hatreds, which must shame the very "Christ" in heaven. The Church, the visible institution, the rigid system of dogma on which it is based—this is the thing; and the spirit of Him who loved others more than Himself—that is almost nothing. The Church crowns its steeples with the Cross; decorates its vestments with the Cross; ornaments its windows and its tombs with the Cross; lends an odor of sanctity to its hymns and prayers and sermons with the Cross—but does not carry or suffer the Cross. The symbol has become the reality—and reality has fled. This, of course, is extreme; but there is such a measure of truth in it that those who love the Church best are conscious most of the weakness of its grip upon life, the loosening of its hold upon the hearts of men.

Consider, again, another phase of the difficulty in which the Church finds herself to-day, and which looks very much like the result of her trifling with dogmatism and symbolism. We have said above that there

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is grave danger that a symbolical misinterpretation of an original fact may gain credence for years, only to clash at last with some newly discovered fact, with a consequent shock to the faith, and the creation of deep distrust not only in elements of error but also in elements of truth in the original interpretation.

It is the common experience of preachers and exponents of Christianity to-day, whenever they are dealing with awakened and truly enquiring minds, to find themselves burdened with the onus of relating long-accepted dogmas of the Church to the realities of life. Take, for example, the difficulty one thus experiences with the doctrine of Atonement. It was a comparatively simple matter, in bygone days, when few people questioned the accepted ideas of heaven and hell, when salvation was regarded as the attainment of the former and the avoidance of the latter, to proclaim the death of Jesus as an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation, a ransom, paid on behalf of the sinner, and to induce the sinner to believe in and rely upon its efficacy, with considerable benefit to the sinner.

But modern movements of thought, traceable to the scientific ideal of truth, have changed all this. The fear of the old-

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fashioned hell of physical torment is no longer a moving force in the mind of average enlightenment. The attractions of heaven, as visualized by our grandfathers, make little appeal to our generation. Salvation is no longer thought of as individual deliverance from future punishment; but in its place has arisen a new thirst for present moral progress and spiritual happiness in the individual, which is further complicated by a demand for the socialization of these blessings. For the moment, the possibilities of the future life, whether for good or evil, have been laid aside for this new insistence on the realization of the highest opportunities of the present life. It is not that the future is denied. It is simply that men insist on thinking of it in terms of the present, believing that its realities may only be approached and understood through the realities of the life we now live.

We have, then, in the traditional presentation of the Atonement a dogma which rests upon concepts which are not valid for the modern mind. It is an explanation of life which does not explain life. It confronts a world of changed mentality, and finds itself out of touch with that world. Which, then, is wrong—dogma, or the changed mind of a race of living, toiling, thinking men?

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Here also abides the danger of the loss of some eternal, vital truth, through its admixture with dogmatic error. Men finding the Cross, so presented, inadequate for life assume that there is nothing at all in it but a tissue of superstition and error. What, then, shall we do? Shall we assume that dogmatic symbolism is right and free human intellect wrong? Shall we devote ourselves to an effort to conquer and destroy that free human intellect, the gift of God? Or shall we pause a moment to ponder if the fault be not partly ours?

If thus we pause we are confronted with one possibility, namely, that dogmatism has in some way misinterpreted the original facts. It is not necessary to assume that the misinterpretation has been complete. Distortion of the facts; lack of perspective in evaluating them; over-emphasis on one fact at the expense of others—all or any of these might cause the difficulty.

Let us consider the possibility of over-emphasis. Has dogmatism in its presentation of the Cross laid undue emphasis on any historical fact to which it is related? Ask the average man what the Cross signifies and his answer may be summed up in one word—Death! That will be his first thought. The Cross means the death of Jesus. He will

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qualify and add to this. But the big word in his answer will be Death. The reason of this is that dogmatism has laid the greatest emphasis on the value of the death of Jesus and has inculcated it for centuries through the symbol of the Cross.

It is easy to see how natural this has been. The historical Cross was the crisis of the life of Jesus. Along the great paths of thought which deal with God, Man, Sin, Redemption, the minds of Jesus and his opponents travelled—travelled from fundamentally different viewpoints, until they clashed. The Cross is the point at which they clashed. This inexorable pointing of the paths of thought and faith to the Cross imparts to the fact of the death of Jesus a significance which may be turned like a searchlight upon every utterance and act of His life. From the very beginning every path He trod led to the Cross. Standing, so to speak, beside His Cross we can look down all the avenues of His life and understand the better everything He said or did as He walked thereon.

It is, in part at least, this capacity of the Cross for throwing a flood of light on every detail of His life that has induced, through centuries, the tradition of the centrality of His death—the habit of viewing His crucifixion in the abstract, dogmatically, sym-

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bolically, as a divine expedient, for the consummation of which all things were coerced. Because we understand His life best through the Cross we have assumed that His life was lived so that He might die on the Cross. Hence the great weight of emphasis upon the supreme value of His death; and hence the place of the Cross in Christian symbolism.

Yet though this tendency was natural it does not follow that it has been in the long run right or beneficial. It could never be right or ultimately beneficial to subordinate the value of His life, the whole comprehensive range of His intellectual and spiritual activity, to the value of a single incident in His life which was the result of His thinking. Facts increase in value as they are properly related to other facts. The value of the death of Jesus will be diminished rather than increased by its removal from its proper historical setting in His life. If there has been any such distortion, lack of perspective, over-emphasis in our view of His death, the greatest service we can render is to correct it.

It is, therefore, proposed that we make an effort, in the following studies, to get at the meaning of His death through the meaning of His life. We shall retrace our steps from the tragic slopes of Calvary to certain quiet,

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ordinary, unpretentious moments in His life, and try to see what He thought and did, and how His thoughts and actions affected His contemporaries. We shall do this in the hope that by a wider understanding of His life we shall uncover some neglected truths which find their highest expression in His Cross. Thus viewed, His death will be seen, not as the end or purpose in His life, but, perhaps, as the sublimest incident in, the most veritably integral part of, His eternal and indestructible life. For Jesus is, above all, the Lord of Life. Salvation, if it comes at all, must come from the birth of His life in us. Unless this be achieved there is no ecclesiastical or dogmatic magic by which His death can benefit us.

III

NEGLECTED MESSAGES OF THE CROSS

III

NEGLECTED MESSAGES

1

ON THE VALUES OF LIFE

1. And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and to have salutations in the market-places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts: they which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation."—MARK 12: 38-40.

2. And there came near unto him James and John the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, "Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee."

And he said unto them, "What would ye that I should do for you?"

And they said unto him, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory."

But Jesus said unto them, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"—MARK 10: 35-38.

3. And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly.

And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But he, turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."

And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples and said unto them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.

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for whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?"—MARK 8: 31-37.

THE PASSAGES before us present with trenchant force one point of disagreement between the mind of Jesus and the mind of His age. The point in question is that of real values in life.

In daily contact with the life of all kinds and conditions of men, Jesus had observed how the outer symbols of rank and privilege were everywhere regarded as things of intrinsic value. This viewpoint was perhaps most obviously betrayed by the Priests, Pharisees, Scribes and other members of the ruling orders. To walk in long robes, to have salutations in the market places, to appropriate places of pre-eminence in society—these were aims in themselves worth striving for. One does not necessarily attribute to these members of the privileged classes the repulsive hypocrisy of overtly stealing the substance of the widow and the fatherless. One need only regard them as members of a dominant element in society, the maintenance of whose privileges entailed hardship and suffering on their social inferiors.

As Jesus Himself suggested, the tragedy of Sadducee, Pharisee, Scribe, and of the

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ruling classes in general, was one of moral blindness rather than of open immorality. They had somehow become confirmed in the habit of confusing privilege with moral right, and as an inevitable consequence parted lightly with moral and spiritual satisfactions in exchange for material possessions and prerogatives. The "pretence" in their prayers was directed as much to self-deception as to the deception of the great public through whose submission their own status was preserved.

These higher orders of society were not alone in their misapprehension of values. The closest followers of Jesus, as we see by the second extract above, were not immune from the same tendency. The demand of James and John is a demand for privilege, a hope that life may *do for them* something entirely independent of their moral right. They had unconsciously accepted the judgment of the society in which they had been reared. Blindly they followed the leadership of the blind, their eyes unopened to the new values set forth in the life and teaching of Jesus. They wasted no thought on the question of their own fitness or unfitness for the honors and responsibilities they coveted.

It was at this point in their failure that Jesus struck remorselessly when He asked

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them "Are ye able to drink my cup, and to be baptized with my baptism?" "Are ye able to *be* my right hand and my left hand, or are you content with seeming to be?" He propounded for them a test of reality, of truth. He would have them know that honors are not honors unless they are deserved; that action, not belief, or desire, is the real test of merit. It is true that they declared themselves ready. It is also true that subsequent events proved either that they over-estimated their own capacity to follow Him, or that they did not grasp the import of His question. For James and John also were among those who, in Gethsemane, forsook Him and fled. Jesus seems to have judged them accurately when He said, "Ye know not what ye ask."

Peter also, that rough, impulsive, promising recruit of the new order, still cherished the conceptions of value held in the world about him. He would have hushed the Nazarene's open prediction of what the world would deem His failure and defeat. There is much significance in the words "He spake the saying openly." It was this open admission of "defeat" that Peter did not like. It ran counter to his sense of values, which exalted material triumph and reward. Knowing this we understand the severity of

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the rebuke Jesus administered to one who by his very nature must have won the liking of his leader, even as he wins the liking of us who read about him hundreds of years later. Jesus struck hard at Peter, as at James and John, on this question of values. It seems as though He would have shocked him into wakefulness. It is not without reason that we read that Jesus "called unto Him the multitude," as well as His disciples. It is His reply to Peter's effort to suppress his predictions of "failure," of rejection, suffering, death. He made this an opportunity to publish with emphatic frankness His own radically different views on the values of life.

There is a suggestion of reminiscence in the words He spoke on that occasion, an overtone of retrospection which is not drowned by the argumentative key which predominates. It is as though He were reasoning out for them, step by step, the stages of an inner argument which He Himself had long since decided, an argument which had left ineradicable impressions upon His mind. "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?" As we read these words we are carried back to many an incident and utterance in the career of the Preaching Carpenter,

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where the same issue has been faced and decided. We think of the story of His temptation: of the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone"; of the decision that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them would be dear at the price of one instant's yielding to the desire for them. We recall His habit of avoiding the acclaim of crowds; His refusal to be labelled with this or that title of honor and position. We recollect His words to the rich young ruler. His parables on values recur to us—the ploughman who discovered the hidden treasure, the merchant who found the most perfect pearl, the fisherman who sorted his fish with regard to their value.

How familiar are these words! How little valued their obvious meaning! What doth any *thing* profit a man as compared to his spiritual life? How much of a man's spiritual satisfaction should he be willing to part with to preserve his existence in this world? These are the questions Jesus put to His disciples and to the multitude, hoping they would learn to answer them as He had already answered them, with complete negation. For the very utterance to which Peter objected discloses the mind of Jesus already made up—"He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many

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things." There is the inner imperative. He *must* suffer, because for him the highest values lay upon that road.

Look now from the vantage point of this incident in his life to the Cross of Calvary. That tragic scene now becomes the unanswerable proof of His sincerity on this question of values. His idea of value was a genuine insight. It possessed the power of transmuting itself into fact and experience. Here then is something the Cross means which has to do with living. It means that the supreme values of life must be sought in the realm of the invisible, the intangible, the spiritual. It means that he who does not find these values and hold them is poor though he find and hold all else beside.

One does not need to be told that the above is no new or startling discovery. One realizes that in all ages since life began some inkling of this truth has found its way into human minds. One admits that dogma has not neglected this phase of the meaning of the Cross utterly; that thousands of exponents of Christianity have proclaimed it, in varying degrees of sincerity. And yet, granting all this, the world about us stands as an unanswerable indictment of the failure of Christendom to make this a living truth in human life. The world gives the

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lie to Jesus on the question of values. Mere things assert their worth over that of souls. Honor, justice, truth, love are freely bartered for place, privilege, material possessions.

This great vital truth—this truth so real to Jesus that He suffered the Cross rather than violate it—what have we done with it? This spiritual treasure, bequeathed to us from the soul of Him we profess to honor and serve, how have we invested it? What return has it yielded in terms of reality, in terms of life, individual and social?

That is a question difficult to answer with anything like precision. This no honest man can doubt, that the investment of life Jesus made to open our eyes to real values has by no means been lost. The world's progress in the recognition of the supreme value of the abiding elements of personality has been slow. Yet there has been progress. But neither can any honest man deny that no more than a feeble ray of the light of truth on this question has yet penetrated the minds of men. One need not be a cynic to take this view. It is necessary only to live, with open eyes, in a world where human life is not yet too great a price to pay for the possession of lesser things.

If, then, Jesus was right about this matter of values, why has the Cross not borne the

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fruit befitting the seed? Perhaps because we who have been entrusted with the charge of planting the seed have not sown the genuine article, but counterfeits of our own choosing. We have concerned ourselves with death. But the Cross of Jesus was concerned with life. We have specialized in teaching men how to die. We have forgotten to teach them for what it is worthwhile to die. Living or dying, it is all the same if we have discovered what is worth living or dying for.

There is no teaching of the Cross without the bearing of it. Men will not believe our message about values until they see us pursuing the values we recommend. So long as the so-called "body of Christ" expresses itself chiefly in terms of stone and mortar, dollars and cents, political and economic power; so long as its members are divided one against the other, torn by strifes, jealousies, envyings, trickeries; so long as the institution submerges or consents to the submergence of the soul it should free and serve—so long will the Cross be denied its fruitage in the triumph of spiritual values over those which are temporal, fleeting, and utterly deceptive.

No one can doubt that the Cross has something the world needs very badly on

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this point of values. But our awakening to this need must be more than intellectual. It must touch the emotion and the will and stir up in us power great enough to overcome not only the world, but ourselves. For a society which forces men to think of values in material terms will never yield one jot to a Church which still cherishes a notable predilection for long robes, chief places at feasts, and salutations in the world's market places.

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2

ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF WILL POWER

And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, "Sit ye here while I pray." And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. And he saith unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here and watch."

And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt."—MARK 14: 32-36.

AT NO point has the over-emphasis placed by Christendom on the death of Jesus been more instrumental in obscuring a vital message of his Cross than at the point of this so-called "agony" in the garden of Gethsemane. This soul-searching hour in the life of the Man of Nazareth has been mainly used in Christian teaching to enhance the intensity of His suffering at the prospect of His crucifixion. By this means the emotions of the listener have been aroused to such an extent that he has been willing to form his judgment on the supreme value of the death of Jesus almost entirely on the

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basis of his emotions. This concentration on the emotional aspects of the incident in Gethsemane has led many people to miss altogether the point, that the story itself is concerned, not with the emotions, but with the will power of Jesus. While others have noted this, they have yet been led into distortion of the true bearing of the story on the part played by His will power on this occasion.

It may be well to substantiate, just here, the above statement that the story of Gethsemane is concerned with the will power of Jesus. It requires no great degree of literary discernment to perceive that the narrative reaches its climax in the words "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt." According to the context Jesus, during this great spiritual battle with Himself, twice, at least, and probably three times, addressed these words to His Heavenly Father, the tension of the narrative being raised by this repetition to its highest pitch. Finally the tension relaxes and the anti-climax is reached when He returns to find His three disciples sleeping, and thereupon indicates that the struggle is over in the words, "Sleep on, now, and take your rest. It is enough. Behold the

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Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." (Mark 14: 41.)

The point of the story, then, lies in the outcome of the struggle rather than in the intensity of it. We are given insight into the severity of His inner conflict in order that we may appreciate more fully the miracle of His victory. It may be important to know that He fought a hard fight. But it is immensely more important for us to know that His spiritual reserves were sufficient unto the emergency. The story is told to show us that He, by His own volition, accepted the Cross; and if this be not grasped there is little to the story but an appeal to sentiment, which, in view of the fact that suffering is a common human experience, is likely to do no more than arouse pity for One whom it is veritably a sacrilege to pity.

Rightly understood, the story of Gethsemane portrays the remarkable will power of Jesus. It reveals Him as possessing to the fullest degree that mysterious element of personality which gives one the power to control oneself, to bend the whole being to the achievement of chosen ends. It brings out the inherent, intrinsic strength of will power of the Jesus of history.

The part which His own natural, inherent will power played in this crisis may be seen

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in the words, "Howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt." At first glance this statement may seem rather contradictory. For there seems to be in it a denial of His own will power. We must not, however, be misled by the fact that the word "will" is constantly used with two distinct, though closely related, meanings. We use it to mean not only the end we seek, but also the psychical power we use in seeking it. We do this naturally because ends are always closely related to means. But Jesus here makes no reference to will power. He speaks of His own immediate aims, purposes, desires, as contrasted with those of God. He is not referring to the psychical power by which He might direct His life to certain ends, but to the ends themselves. He implies no incompatibility between the divine will power and His own natural inherent will power. He does not pray for the removal or suppression of His own will power, but for the correction of the ends to which it is to be directed. His problem is not the problem of *how* to realize an end, but of *what* end is to be realized. "Howbeit not *what* I wish but *what* Thou dost desire," so might His words be correctly paraphrased. Certainly there is no ground here for any minimizing of the part played by the natural

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will power of Jesus on this spiritually momentous occasion.

When we turn back over the records of His words and deeds, we find evidence everywhere that the Jesus of history was a personality distinguished, above His contemporaries, for His will power. Who, of all those who came into contact with Him during his lifetime on earth, ever found Him acquiescent, pliable, easily influenced? We should expect to find in His relationships with His own deeply loved followers, if anywhere, some indication of a tendency to compromise. Yet the story tells of a constant clashing between His standards and theirs, of the steady, consistent assertion of His will power over theirs.

One can think of many incidents which illustrate this. There was that early morning at Capernaum when the disciples, in breathless haste, rudely interrupted His private devotions to drag Him back to the success which awaited Him in that city where all men were seeking Him. Who can fail to see the will power behind His reply: "Let us go elsewhere, into the next towns, that I may preach there also, *for to this end came I forth.*" There was that other morning by the lakeside, when tired fishermen, wearied with a long night of fruitless toil,

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drove their aching muscles and sinews to renewed exertions, in obedience to His "word." We remember His unusual faculty of compelling men to drop the habitual tasks of a lifetime, to leave behind them home, loved ones, the accumulated equipment of life's business, in response to the simple words, "Follow me," words by their very simplicity bespeaking the strength of the will that made them potent.

The entire story of the last journey to Jerusalem, whither Jesus had turned with an ever-clarifying consciousness of inevitable crisis and unescapable doom, is a magnificent portrayal of will power that would yield neither to the implacable opposition of the enemy nor to the mistaken ambitions of his friends. In all literature there is not conceived, nor is there indeed conceivable, a more complete test of will power than that which Jesus here successfully withstood. To face the certainty of pain, the shame of death as a criminal; to face complete failure by all contemporary standards; to lack the sympathy and understanding of one's closest friends; to be unable to convey to anyone the faintest glimmer of the real issues at stake, the smallest gleam of His glorious rightness, His moral triumph: to face such an end under such conditions,

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and yet to go on with unfaltering step—if this be not will power, what then can it be?

Turning now to the Cross we find that it stands as a final proof of the will power of Jesus. His reserves of will power were sufficient for the ultimate need. Gethsemane shows that He did not regard His Cross as a fate to be suffered, as though there were some inherent value in sacrifice *per se*. His judgment was strongly negative on the value of sacrifice as such. When He cried, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me," those words did not express *merely* a natural reaction against the horror of suffering and death. They were also a clear-cut and sound judgment on the intrinsic value of these things. There is no value in pain, suffering, death. But there are values which, in certain circumstances, may only be achieved through some or all of these experiences. His natural desire to avoid the Cross was rejected, not because it was wrong, but only because of the circumstances. It was good in itself. But it was rejected because, though good, it was not best. Hence Jesus chose the Cross not in obedience to outward necessity, but because it stood in the way of an end which He had devoted his will power to achieve. Since He could not bring men to the truth

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about God, Sin, Salvation, any other way, He must needs go the way by which it could be done. Thus did Jesus of Nazareth use His will power.

The use Jesus made of His will power distinguished Him from all his contemporaries, and still continues to distinguish Him from all but the very few in whom His mind has created new life. The abuse of will power takes many forms, but in some form it is found in most of us.

The most common abuse of will power is its employment for the attainment of false values. We commonly call this materialism, which, by the way, is a fault restricted to no particular class or order of society. In our Lord's day it was a common abuse of will power, not only with Gentile or Herodian or Zealot or with the common people, but also with Scribe, Pharisee and Sadducee. To-day also it is idle to bandy the epithet "materialist." He is a rare and precious individual, in any class of society, who has learned to avoid the abuse of will power, which harnesses that divinely-imparted capacity of personality to purposes unworthy of its great potentialities. But though materialism is the most universal abuse of will power, it is by no means the worst abuse of it. For even the setting of will power to

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meaner ends may develop the capacity itself, so that if, in the Providence of God, the miracle of repentance should happen, there would be will power available for the realization of worthier purposes. A repentant captain of industry or baron of finance would, as a rule, be capable of greater achievements of unselfish service than a repentant under-strapper. If will power is worth anything at all, the more one has of it the better, provided it can be harnessed to the right purpose.

A greater abuse of will power than its misdirection is its coercion. And it was on this point that Jesus clashed with the Jewish legalists. They were all for the coercion of the will power, for applying its collective potency to externally imposed aims. Their coercion of will power was closely related to their materialism. They were devoted to a system which seemed, among other things, materially advantageous, and they found it expedient to coerce others into devotion to the system, even though to those thus coerced it did not appear altogether advantageous. But deeper than this mere materialism lay a fundamental fear of, a lack of faith in, humanity. To them the ordinary individual was not a personality to be developed from within outward, but a complex of

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strange forces to be suppressed, controlled, coerced, from without inward.

These "wise men" trafficked in personality, devoting themselves to bettering the Creator's work in their own way. Figuratively speaking, they cuffed and kicked and battered the will power of their generation, so that they might control it. And they did this because in their heart of hearts they were afraid of what might happen if they did not control it. Monumental Wisdom! Pride unsurpassable! Leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees! Ah, yes! But let us not speak out of turn. The same leaven works to-day, does it not? Works, as then, without power to raise and sweeten, with only power to ferment, sour and putrefy. For society will not be leavened save only through its own will power. It will not be confined save only within moulds of its own choosing. We render it not true service in choosing for it, but in teaching it what to choose. Coercion is our way. It is not the way of Jesus, nor, if we can believe Him, is it the way of God.

There is a third abuse of will power, more subtle and dangerous than either of those already mentioned, namely, that which results in the atrophy of this most needful capacity of personality. This work is

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wrought, usually with the highest motives, by those who counsel quietism of whatever shade, from gnosticism to millennialism. At the basis of every type of quietism lies the belief that the natural will power is intrinsically evil, and that the only escape from its baneful influence is its complete negation. Those who thus think progress in two directions, either towards the completely contemplative or meditative life, or towards abnormal states of ecstatic experience.

The Essenes were a type of quietists in the days of Jesus. But he found no attraction in their doctrines, no satisfaction or hope of progress in their austere withdrawal from society. The Messianists were another type of quietists. Yet he was not found among those who were content to hope and wait for a miraculously transformed world. Even with these, the most saintly and pious of his age, the soul of Jesus found not its true home.

There is no more pitiful page in history than that which reveals the sincerest piety in Judaism powerless to do more for a needy world than to withdraw, to hope, to scan the heavens. For these people inherited and cherished the noblest ideals of the prophetic spirit. But they did not inherit the prophetic will power to clothe their ideals in a

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congruous life. To them the moral ideal of righteousness made appeal. But they looked upon the prophets as foretellers of righteousness, and forgot that they were above all doers of righteousness, actively participating in human life in response to a divine mission of reconciliation.

The quietistic perversion of the prophetic spirit in religion goes on in our own day, and those who cleave to it are those who minimize and deny the potentiality of the natural human will power, through misunderstanding the personality and work of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no justification for this in the records. The use, not the abuse, of will power, was the means of His moral triumph and victory.

It is an error, is it not, to regard the psychic reality which we call will power as inherently either good or evil? Will power is simply will power, and it acquires moral significance according to the uses or abuses to which it is put. It can be directed to ignoble aims. Yet surely if our aims are wrong, the blame is not to be laid on the power by which we pursue them, but on our perverted judgments of value. If we have misused and abused a power which is the gift of the Creator, we may not conclude that the same power is useless as a means of reach-

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ing right ends, or even that right ends can in any way be reached without it.

Here again, then, the Cross has a very practical meaning for *life*. It shows us that will power is not a liability, but an asset, an integral, essential element in every normal personality. Without it personality is colorless, vapid, insipid, futile. And the history of humanity bears out the Cross on this point. It is no accident that will power is an unfailing characteristic in all men of achievement. It is no accident that the world of men has never found good any teaching which coerces or minimizes will power.

The Cross eternally signifies the potentiality of will power. It reminds every man who has eyes to see and ears to hear that in him there is a divinely imparted capacity which, if he will use it aright, will enable him to conquer himself, the world, and death itself. The Cross does not glorify weakness, acquiescence, passivity. It glorifies strength, initiative, action devoted to the purposes of God. The Cross teaches us to despise that brand of piety which excuses itself from conflict on the ground of impotency; and bids us honor the piety that risks defeat rather than simulate victory. The Cross bids us put the ban on self-pity and the brand of Cain on the malingeringer.

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To us and all our spiritual ancestors who have had for centuries the record of the life and mind of Jesus has been committed the responsibility of nurturing the will power of the race, and inspiring its direction to worthy ends. How have we discharged our trust? Rather poorly, one fears. All that is cheap, flashy, tawdry, hypocritical, cruel and evil in human society is so because we have failed to develop the will power to make it otherwise. It is not only that we do not know what is right and good. It is also that we have not the will power to do it. We have haggled always over the price of that which is priceless. We have not been *able* to drink the cup of Jesus or to be baptized with His baptism. We have forsaken Him and fled, hiding our moral cowardice under the dogma of His divinity and our humanity. It is so comforting to think of divinity in absolute terms, to persuade ourselves that we cannot be "like Him." Daily our past sins have been used as an excuse for our present and future sins. With huge contentment we have held aloft the standard of the perfection of Jesus, and travelled by the less conspicuous standard of our own imperfections, calming our inner fears, on our darkened road, by resort to ecclesiastical

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and dogmatic magic which claims to make black white, evil good, sin sinlessness.

Now then, or never, since we have got the world into a sorry mess, let us gird ourselves and save it. For the will power that falters not at the Cross is still greater than any power on earth. One generation of its use will work the miracle that will never be worked by all the arts of diplomacy, all the magic of ecclesiasticism.

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3

ON THE TRUE SOURCE OF WISDOM

He that correcteth a scorner getteth to himself shame:
And he that reproveth a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee:
Reprove a wise man and he will love thee.
Give instruction to a wise man and he will yet be wiser;
Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.
The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me thy days shall be multiplied
And the years of thy life shall be increased.
If thou art wise thou art wise for thyself:
And if thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it.

PROVERBS 9: 7-12.

And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered unto him: and he was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he falleth at his feet, and beseecheth him much, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole and live."

And he went with him: and a great multitude followed him and thronged him.

While he yet spake (to the woman who had pressed through the throng to touch the hem of his garment), they come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?"

But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, "Fear not, only believe."—MARK 5: 21-24, 35-36.

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THE KEY to the story of Jairus is the fact that he is described as "a ruler of the synagogue." This means that he was a leading layman of the congregation, a pillar of the local church. As such, he was doubtless well versed in all the traditions, customs and dogmas of the religious system to which he belonged, and was expected at all times to set an example of strict faithfulness to his fellow members in these matters.

It meant a great deal to this leading Jewish citizen of Capernaum to come, in the rôle of a suppliant, to the preaching carpenter of Nazareth. Under ordinary circumstances the lives of these two would never have touched so intimately. But the circumstances were not ordinary. The little daughter of Jairus lay at the point of death. And the love of her father feared death, both for her, and also for the pain it would bring to him. Therefore, driven by fear-filled love, he risked the disapproval of his ecclesiastical superiors and associates, thus proving himself more a father than an official of the Church.

Assuming that Jairus was typical of the highest product of the dominant religious system of the time, we have here an excellent opportunity of observing and contrasting the mind of Jesus and the mind of His age.

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Jairus and Jesus were both confronted with an elemental fact of human experience, namely, death. The story shows that they reacted toward it in radically different ways. Behind this difference in reaction there is a deep-seated and fundamental difference in viewpoint, which it may be worth our while to examine.

The most intense moment in the story comes when messengers arrive from the house of Jairus to tell him that his worst fears have been realized. Death has come. There is nothing more to be done. Yet note how the record tells us that Jesus here intervened, "not heeding the words spoken," with the counsel, "Fear not; only believe." He seems to have felt that what Jairus needed at that particular moment was to be braced against fear, stimulated to faith. It is as though He, knowing like a true physician the very soul of Jairus, had been able at once to put His finger on the point at which he would need help. Jesus evidently felt that the trouble with Jairus was a certain bondage to fear.

It is not hard to see how Jesus knew this and why He said to Jairus just what He did. For one so deeply versed as Jesus was in the sacred literature of His people, it would be no secret that fear was and always had been

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fundamental in Jewish psychology. He knew that all his life Jairus had been trained to react to the emotion of fear. Nay, more, He knew that fear, by reason of his upbringing, was the native habit of his soul, the psychical basis upon which men of Jairus' type relied in all their relationships with God and men. For from the Assyrian to the Roman, yea, and down to our own times, fear has been the corner stone of civilization, a feature which Jewish civilization shared alike with all others, ancient and modern.

It may be said of the Jews, as of no other people, that their culture was embraced in their religion. And wherever we turn in their religion, and particularly in the dominant religious system of the days of Jesus, we may observe the basic importance of fear.

The whole elaborate ritualistic system, prized possession of the priest, with its distinctions between clean and unclean, with its ceremonial cleansings, its rigid governance of every detail of sacrifice and worship, leads the student inevitably backward to an age-old fear of the violation of the deity's sacredness. The moral law, pride of Scribe and Pharisee, splendid though it was, had never adequately assimilated the prophetic ideal of morality, and rested likewise for its sanctions on fear. And the sages of Israel,

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when they endeavored to popularize the spirit and teaching of Judaism, epitomized the highest wisdom of the system as *knowledge* of God, proceeding from fear of Him. The passage above quoted from Proverbs illustrates this and shows how fundamental was fear to the system in which Jairus had been trained, and of which he was a notable ornament.

By the standards of Judaism Jesus was anything but wise. The "instructions" of its wise men were constantly disregarded by Him. He did not fear God, but hourly sought closer union with Him. And as for caring about the increase of the years of His life, that was a matter of small importance to Him. The simple fact is that His idea of wisdom differed so completely with Judaism as to be incompatible. If anything is clear from the records, it is that Jesus disowned fear as a basis of thinking and acting. Not only were His conceptions of value, His standards of righteousness different, but the very habit of His soul, the deep subconscious levels of His mind, were different. For Jesus refused to recognize fear.

Not only did He tread fear underfoot, but He had found something quite opposite to take its place. In our ordinary conversation the antonym of fear is courage. But

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courage is not a big enough word to cover that habit of soul which made Jesus the most unique figure in history. The word which He used was faith. If one wants to know His view of fear one must understand His conception of faith.

It will easily be remembered that whenever Jesus found men fearful He recommended as an antidote faith, either by name or in substance. When His disciples became panic-stricken in a storm He asked, "Have ye not yet faith?" Likewise when Peter, his mind working in the habitual channels of accepted tradition, interpreted a great catch of fish as evidence of a supernatural element in Jesus and recoiled from contact with Him in genuine fear, Jesus said, "Fear not . . . follow me." In other words, don't run away from that which is divine; follow it and work its works. Whenever Jesus observed in people the capacity to break through the bonds of fear, forged into custom and tradition, He called it faith. When the spirit of a woman drove her to a new and untried course for dealing with an affliction, Jesus said to her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." When two blind men called on Him to heal them he enquired, "Believe ye that I am able?" Similarly, when He found Himself unable to

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do anything for people He ascribed the failure to lack of faith. He could do no mighty work in His own home village for this very reason.

We see, then, how different was the wisdom of Jesus to the wisdom of Jairus and all his contemporaries. Jairus had been taught that the highest wisdom is knowledge proceeding from fear. Jesus believed that the highest wisdom is love proceeding from faith. The faith of Jesus was a much wider and more profound thing than it commonly is to us. It governed not only intellect, but will and emotion. It was not a system of thinking only. It was a way of acting and feeling. His faith was not governed by circumstance. Its very function was the moulding of circumstance.

If we have any doubt of this, we have only to turn to the Cross. The Cross means that Faith is greater than Fear. The Cross is His ultimate testimony against fear, His guerdon of victory over fear. Nothing more can be said against fear. The Cross says that God is to be trusted and loved without regard to circumstance. The Cross says men are worth dying for, even though their actions seem to belie it. God is to be loved and trusted. He purposes only our good. Man is to be loved and trusted. He is not

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to be feared. He can do us no real harm though he do his worst. The Cross says there is no way out of the bondage of fear but to refuse to be afraid and take the consequences.

If the world needs any message the Cross has for it to-day, it needs this warning against the dire consequences of the wisdom of fear, this challenge to the higher wisdom of faith. The wisdom of the world we live in is still overwhelmingly nothing more than the sagacity of selfishness. The bulk of our individual and corporate energy is devoted to the erection of defences against our fears. As individuals, we find our thoughts peopled by fears; our actions, if only we would stop to analyze them, constantly influenced by fears. We are in the grip of fear from childhood. Fear of hunger, of cold, of fire, of water, of toil, of ennui, of poverty, of failure, of sickness, of death—of a thousand and one things too numerous to mention.

And this fear within us is like a psychical cancer, ceaselessly extending its ramifications, corrupting, throttling, deforming every normal capacity of our mind. From it spring envy, jealousy, malice, cunning, duplicity, greed, ruthlessness—all those inner fires of evil which, when they flash in the eyes of

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men, suggest to the beholder the eyes of the beasts of the jungle.

Our corporate life suffers in the same way through deep-seated fear and the consequent warping of our judgments and motives. Fear is the great divider, the inspirer of conflicting and mutually destructive groupings. It matters not whether one considers political, economic, social or religious lines of cleavage in our world, in all alike it will be found that the habit of fear is a fundamental cause of all such division. All attempts to overcome these barriers to peace and progress, which do not recognize and endeavor to deal with the spiritual malady which causes them, are foredoomed to failure. Conferences which seek remedies in compromise, in bargaining, in playing this interest against that interest, are waste of time and money. They are so many quacks striving to deal with a mortal disease, unable to do more than soothe their patient temporarily, only to have him arouse later to the greater exasperation of jangled nerves and weakened vitality.

There is no escape from the morass of fear in which the world finds itself to-day, save by one way, the way of faith; and the way of faith is impossible while the habit of fear governs our standards and inspires our

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actions. The wisdom of the world cannot see that. But the wisdom of Jesus of Nazareth saw it and acted on it. It seemed clear to Him that faith was the only thing capable of overcoming fear; that good was the only power before which evil would flee. He appears to have felt that if God could be trusted faith was amply justified. Silly idea, was it not? Led Him to play into the hands of His enemies! Made shipwreck and failure of His life! Ah, well, as this old world is now constituted, that, it seems, is part of the wisdom of faith. And though it does seem from our viewpoint such consummate folly, who is there who would seriously argue that, if it were applied to our fear-ridden world, it would not prove the shortest and surest way to abiding peace and progress?

For nearly two thousand years now we have possessed, in the record of the mind and life of Jesus, the secret of the wisdom which proceeds from faith. It is just another of the talents bequeathed to us by Him whom we delight to style as Master, Lord, and by other high-sounding titles. What have we done with this talent? Buried it, have we not? Ah, yes! We have buried this secret about His life and devoted ourselves to wrangling about His death. The matter of

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His death gave such scope for the seductive joys of argument and controversy. It lent itself so beautifully to the fascinating game of speculating about something that can never be settled. How swiftly have the centuries run through God's hour-glass while we, His workmen, have amused ourselves, forgetting the treasure we have buried. Playing a game! Who can blame us? It is so much more pleasant than a toilsome, heavily burdened tramp up the slopes of Calvary. And it serves us just as well, does it not, to think we are wise, as to be so in the sight of a hypothetical God?

Well, then, we *are* wise. But what a monumental wisdom it is! Wisdom which uses science to invent ways of inflicting pain and death. Industry to build up competitive and mutually destructive societies. Capital to chain the brains of the world to the wheels of industry. Education to train the masses to take their places as cogs in the industrial machine. And religion—to raise benign and holy hands in blessing on the whole. Wonderful, beautiful, marvellous Wisdom! Wisdom of fear, of hate, of slavery, of damnation!

But still the Cross stands, bleak and gaunt, on Calvary, to remind us that there is such a thing as Faith. Still there lies ready

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to the hand of the Church the wisdom which is greater than the wisdom of the world. If only God, in His infinite mercy, would bring back faith again into the Church! If he of Rome would doff his robes of earthly splendor and he of Canterbury forsake the ways of courts and politicians; if rival camps in the sham battles of dogmatism and ecclesiasticism of every type would suddenly awake and put on the stature of the manhood of Jesus! Then we might see faith at work in the world again, and the toys and baubles of the Church's childhood swept aside in the heat and burden of the day.

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4

ON FATHERHOOD AND SONSHIP.

1. But who is there of you, having a servant, plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, "Come straightway and sit down to meat;" and will not rather say unto him "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken: and afterward thou shalt eat and drink"? Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do."—LUKE 17: 7-10.

2. And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.

Now the elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." But he was angry and would not go in: and his father came out and intreated him. But he answered and said to his father, "Lo these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came which hath devoured thy

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living with harlots, thou killest for him the fatted calf." And he said unto him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—LUKE 15: 21-32.

HITHERTO we have considered some points of difference between the mind of Jesus and the mind of His age on the subject of Man and his social relationships. We have seen, first, that Jesus regarded man as being created for the pursuit and realization of spiritual satisfaction, to the achievement of which end he must learn to control all his physical appetites and material desires. We have observed, secondly, that Jesus regarded man as having been created in possession of the power necessary to give him this self-control, if only he be stimulated and directed in the use of it. We have noted, thirdly, that man's will power, if it is to function normally, must proceed from a deep-lying habit of the soul, a distinctive spiritual outlook, which we have called faith, and which we have concluded produces love as its most perfect fruit.

It is when we reach this point in the thinking of the Jesus of history, that we of necessity pass, as He also, no doubt, passed, to the consideration of another relationship, which is entailed by such a view of human personality and its proper expression in society. It

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will not do to spin beautiful theories of life which take no account of the facts of life. Humanity, and human society as we find them in the world, seem to deny the possibility of such a way of living as Jesus believed in. Consequently, if one takes into account merely the facts of our life in this world, he will be driven to question whether the highest values are spiritual; whether the will is capable of withstanding what seems to be the pre-ordained pressure of life; whether, after all, the truest wisdom is neither the wisdom of fear, nor the wisdom of faith, but the wisdom of ruthless selfishness

Mere sentimental idealism is no help to us when we face the hard facts of life. So far as knowledge leads us we have only one life to live. We cannot afford to delude ourselves even about spiritual satisfactions. There is no sense in setting the will power to attain them at the expense of other desirable ends, if the spirit is in the end no more than the flesh. Faith must go beyond, even as it proceeds from, facts. In short, a view of human personality and human society such as Jesus held requires as a basis the real existence and moral sovereignty of God. The spiritual view of human relationships

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entails dependence, material and spiritual, upon God.

Now it lies outside our need and purpose, at this point, to enter into an apology for the real existence and sovereignty of God. It is enough for our purposes that both Jesus and His chief opponents cherished those convictions. To Pharisee and Sadducee, equally as to Jesus, there was no doubt of Man's dependence on God, no lack of appreciation of His indispensability to any but the most sordidly materialistic outlook upon life.

Not in the fact of, but in the nature of, relationship to God did there develop antipathy between the mind of Jesus and the very best thought of His generation, antipathy so fundamental that it became a contributory cause of His crucifixion; antipathy so potent that unless we can grasp it we cannot hope to comprehend the meaning of the Cross, or to resolve the moral difficulties which it creates.

The point of this significant difference on the nature of Man's relationship to God is brought out in the passages above quoted. Let us learn from them the view of the opponents of Jesus, as He saw it, and consider the difficulties it raises.

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The orthodox Jewish conception of Man's relationship to God was, in the days of Jesus, that of *servitude*. It inevitably expressed itself in practical life in terms of *duty* and *reward*. This will be surprising to no student of the Old Testament. It is but the logical outcome of the "Covenant" idea, the genius of which is commercial. There is much to be said, one readily admits, for the covenant conception of the Divine-Human relationship. There is room in it for the development of the noble idea of service, the morally salutary idea of duty. And the finest things in pre-Christian Jewish culture rise from that source.

But, in spite of this, Old Testament religion reveals the fact that the covenant conception of relationship to God was never, even at its best, more than a partial expression of the truth. It was an idea that stood successfully in times of prosperity. But in days of adversity, when service was arduous and rewards were meagre, it failed to resolve the hard, practical problems of life. The prophets were conscious of the failure of the covenant relationship as popularly conceived, largely because they lived and ministered in days of actual or imminent national adversity. For them it became increasingly impossible to fit the facts of life

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to that view of the relationship between God and His people, and yearly more difficult to get the people to respond to it.

The prophets endeavored to meet the deficiency of the covenant idea by declaring that the misfortunes which befell Israel were due to violation of the terms of the covenant. That was good as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. It did not explain why those who fulfilled best the terms of the covenant often suffered first and most heavily. The second Isaiah, with his great vision of Israel as the servant of God called to the salvation of human society, ennobled the covenant idea of relationship to its utmost capacity. Yet even this great conception of the covenant failed to carry the day.

The plain fact is that the barrier to moral and spiritual progress in Israel lay not so much in failure to live up to the covenant idea of relationship to God, as in the fact that the conception itself was not big enough for the demands of life. The ideas of servitude, duty, reward, were inadequate as a basis of relationship to God. They contained no motive divine enough to give Man the victory over himself and over his circumstances. Jeremiah sensed the deficiency of the covenant conception when his prophetic

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vision led him to the thought of a "New Covenant," written not on the statute book, defined not in terms of duty and reward, but graven on the heart, springing from the mysterious recesses where abides the real motive power of personality. Jeremiah's hope of a "New Covenant" is tacit admission of the failure of the old. It is a groping after a new basis of relationship between the individual and God which will have power to make man cleave to the will of God regardless of the circumstances under which he must do so, careless of rewards, so the purposes of God be achieved.

When we seek the reason of the failure of the Old Testament conception of the Divine-Human relationship, we find that it consistently bred in the minds of those who held it certain essentially immoral tendencies of thought, which, when transmuted into conduct, created numberless difficulties. Of these tendencies we may name two, particularism and materialism. In other words, the covenant conception of relationship to God bore as its chief fruits pride and privilege. Those who shared the covenant learned to spurn those who did not, and to esteem themselves worthy, through the covenant, of peculiar privileges from which others, not so situated, were mechanically

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excluded. Human nature being what it is, it was an easy step thence to the point where privilege outweighed duty, where rewards were demanded out of all proportion to services rendered.

The passage first quoted above shows conclusively that this was the situation in Israel in the days of Jesus. The average faithful Jew of the time had an extravagant idea of the rewards to which his self-approved faithfulness entitled him, and was most thoroughly discomfited over the failure to realize them. It may be doubted whether the members of the ruling classes, Sadducee, Scribe, Pharisee, actually shared in this general discontent. They were well enough as things were. But the nature of the popular Messianic expectations, the fiery impatience of the zealots, are true indications of the temper of the public. The great mass demanded rewards. And what rewards! Political triumph over the pagan world. Consolation for past wrongs. Revival of earlier triumphs. Abolition of physical, economic and social disabilities of every kind. In short, they demanded the perfection of reward, and demanded it on the ground of their right as the sons of Abraham, heirs of the promises of the ancient covenant

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interpreted according to the dictates of their own wishes.

They were, then, precisely in the position of a servant who demands of his master favors and rewards out of all proportion to his service, the denial of which would lead to counsels of despair. Jesus saw quite plainly that that was the sure end of the Zealot movement. He knew it would lead, as it did, to counsels of despair, and that it was consequently foredoomed to disaster. To this whole view of relationship to God He was diametrically and inexorably opposed.

We see this opposition expressed in His parable on duty, wherein He exposes the fatuous conceit, the unmitigated folly, of thinking thus about one's relationship to God. The teaching of the parable is that reward must be congruous with relationship; that a relationship of servitude brings the reward of a servant if the duty be fulfilled, and nothing more. To expect the full measure of God's grace for mere duty is ridiculous. The servant has no claim on the love of the Master. Here, then, is the criticism of Jesus on the covenant idea of relationship to God. It fails because of its limitations. The Jew, in yearning for the

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bounties of God's grace, was right. But in hoping to realize them on the basis of a relationship of servitude he was wrong.

The parable on duty, then, is the negative side of the teaching of Jesus on this subject. It is aimed at exposing a false conception of relationship to God. The parable of the Prodigal Son is its positive complement. In it Jesus sought to teach the conditions and privileges of Sonship, the true relationship to God. Let us consider first the conditions of Sonship.

It is clear from the parable that the love and favor of the Divine Father are not bestowed for service rendered at all. They are not commodities to be traded in. If this is not so, then there is no point whatever in the welcome accorded the erring son who had rendered no service, but had devoured the living of his father with harlots. If this be so, the whole elaborate theory of duty and reward, which was the very core of Jewish legalism, which is the very core of Christian legalism, must be abandoned. Not all that we can do earns the right to God's love and favor. His grace is free.

Is it possible, then, that there is no condition to be fulfilled before we can realize right relationship to God? Are we simply to believe that He forgives our sins and that

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there is an end to the matter? Yes and No! We are to believe that He freely forgives our sins as soon as we ask Him. But that is not the end of the matter. Let us turn now to the elder son of the parable. It is very easy for us to sympathize with him, is it not? His conceptions of right and justice find their echo in ours, do they not? And yet, if we are led by his example, we will do as he did and renounce our sonship. For he manifestly thought of his relationship to his father in terms of servitude, duty and reward. And with what result? He became a son in name only, but a servant in fact. Had he received his dues he would have been paid wages and packed off about his business. He had been a most faithful and efficient servant, but he was in no true sense a son of his father. The return of his prodigal brother was the test of his sonship, and he failed to measure up to it. His mind, the eternally valuable element of his personality, through which he might have entered into oneness with the father, was but the mind of a stranger in the household. Had he been a true son he would have forgotten his own long years of toil and self-denial; he would have blotted out the memory of his brother's sin and folly; and, freely as the father, would have offered the

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wealth he had helped to create, the love he had faithfully nurtured and guarded, for the restoration of the wanderer.

There is, then, a condition of sonship. It is the maintenance of the relationship itself. That was the point of the struggle of Jesus in Gethsemane. To love what the father loves; to aim at the father's purposes; to find joy in doing the father's work, and reward in the consciousness of his confidence and love—that is sonship, as any father knows. Right relationship to God begins within. It is primarily a state of mind which expresses itself in glad and spontaneous obedience and in joyful assurance of its own rightness. It is creative, not acquisitive, even as the Father. It has nothing to do with external conditions viewed as rewards. The elder son went astray as soon as he began to assert his "rights."

Now that brings us to the second point of the parable, the privileges of sonship. It is easy to perceive that according to this parable Jesus believed that the justice of God was not to be estimated by external or material criteria. The fact that material possessions and privileges are often attained by evil, unjust, cruel and selfish men, need present no difficulty to our minds any more

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than to the mind of Jesus. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and those who sow to the flesh shall reap, according to their several abilities, that which the flesh yields. The hard working elder brother stands in the picture of our parable clad in the soiled and uncouth garments of his daily toil. But the best robe is brought forth to cover the filthy rags of the prodigal. The elder brother was denied even a kid for a jollification with his friends, but the choicest calf in the stalls provided meat for those who made merry over the return of his brother.

Ah, then, if this is the reward of sonship, who would be a Son? But it is not the reward. The reward is the relationship itself, and in the end, everything else goes with it. "Son, thou art ever with me, and *all* that is mine is thine." Sonship is assured of complete reward. God is just.

But it is just here that we, like the elder brother of the parable, falter. We are incapable of taking the long view of life. As Browning says:

"Oh if we draw a circle premature
Heedless of far gain
Greedy for quick return of profits,
Sure bad is our bargain."*

*Robert Browning: "The Grammarian's Funeral."

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Perhaps no incident in history has caused such sincere questioning of the justice of God as the death of Jesus of Nazareth. We are all interested in the problem of justice raised by the Cross, because it seems to typify so exactly the problems of our own life. There are combinations of circumstances in the lives of all of us which, sincerely considered, seem to work upon us the gravest injustice. The Cross has always been difficult to reconcile with any honest, moral ideal of justice. It is not too much to say that there is no adequate solution of the moral difficulties raised by the Cross in any of the various shades of the sacramentarian's view of the death of Jesus. If His death be an atonement, a price, a satisfaction, an oblation, then there is no possible way of removing the injustice of the Cross, except at the expense of the moral character of God. If His death was in any sense a price exacted by God for our forgiveness, the freedom of God's grace is a fiction. It is not free. It has been bought and paid for. What do we gain, how do we not confuse men, by telling them that God's love cannot be bought, and then, in the same breath, telling them that Jesus has already bought it? How do we interpret God as just by teaching that He exacted from the guiltless what He ought, by

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all the canons of morality, to have exacted from the guilty? If we are to think of God in terms of servitude let us do so straightly and honestly. Let us not try to mix in our minds two conceptions which are antipathetic and will never coalesce.

For the conception of Sonship as the basis of relationship to God, when kept clear of that of servitude, does resolve the problem of the apparent injustice of the Cross. From that viewpoint there is no injustice in the Cross. Our parable teaches this plainly. The elder son had his cross. He toiled and slaved with, as he thought, no other reward than toil and slavery. But he was wrong, was he not? The very toil of which he complained carried in it the privilege of sonship. His final perfect reward was assured, if only he could have believed it. But he did not believe it. It was at this point that Jesus, true Elder Son, disagreed with him. He did believe it. He was so close to His Father that no Cross could come between them. To Him the Cross was an incident, and in it opportunity outweighed privation and suffering.

Have we, then, through over-emphasis on the death of Jesus, through absorption in an ever-growing symbolism, derived from Judaism and influenced by pagan mystery cults,

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failed to understand and convey to men something vital of the meaning the Cross unfolds when viewed as an incident in the authentic life of Jesus? If we retrace our steps to some quiet hour in that life, spent in the instruction of His disciples by the narration of the parable on duty; if we go back to another ordinary day in His life, when He silenced the murmuring Scribes and Pharisees with the parable of the Prodigal Son, shall we then understand His Cross better, see it in clearer perspective as it was related to His thinking and acting? It is possible, is it not?

So viewed, the Cross yields us Jesus' conception of the true basis of relationship to God, and proves that His ideas were real ideas that governed His life. So viewed, the Cross reveals God as the divine Father who loves, has loved, will ever love every soul in the universe. So viewed, the Cross teaches that no sin or disobedience is great enough to alter that love; that God's forgiveness is free, not to be bought for any price, earned by any service. So viewed, the Cross reveals that sonship is participation in the very nature of God. So viewed, the Cross offers the highest opportunity within reach of man.

Nor, when viewed from this angle, is the

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Cross devoid of practical guidance in our attitude toward the apparent inequalities and injustices of life. Its very practical meaning is that, if we can bring ourselves to trust the justice of God, then, for us, these inequalities and injustices will cease to have any meaning or value. So long as we continue to struggle for material rewards, so long as we place upon them value worth the absorption of our energies and capacities in their attainment, just so long will they continue to be worth the same thing to others, just so long will society be torn by rival and contending interests. In this direction there is no way out of the endless wheel of class, national and racial jealousies and strifes. By mere revolution we may exchange masters, but we shall never transform values.

On the contrary, supposing a great body of men should elect really to follow Jesus, should cease to respond to the stimulus of material aims and ambitions. Supposing such a group should say: "Very well, you may follow material rewards, if you will, but we won't. We'll be content for the time being with the bare necessities, which we can produce for ourselves"—what then would happen? The thing which is happening all over the world—the break-down of the present economic order through the

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failure of the motives on which it has relied. The public "laziness," so deplored and castigated in certain quarters, is not altogether mere laziness. It is a vague instinct that tells men that life must contain something more than slavery. Men will work again when there is something worth working for. One can hardly blame them if they will not work to provide the ruling classes with the luxuries and extravagances that can do nothing but damn them.

The Church must dissociate itself from extravagance and luxury, and from men to whom these have become a *sine qua non* of life, until the legitimate needs of all men are met. The call to poverty, or at least to the maximum of self-abnegation which is consistent with spiritual progress, is to-day the call supreme, for the practical Christian. Society cannot go on "enjoying" the higher opportunities of life vicariously through custodians who daily prove themselves unworthy. There is a basic insincerity in it against which it is the birthright of the honest soul to protest. The display of extravagance, the shameless indulgence in luxury, which in general characterizes those who hold the whip hand in the present order; the pandering of commerce and industry and finance to these elements—these

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things are fuel to the flames of universal madness. Unless something is done to stop it, the disorders men fear are certain to come.

The Church has no part on one side or the other in a war between conflicting material interests. She has, however, the responsibility of reconciling man to man and Man to God. Somehow a new nexus must be provided for human co-operation, harmony, progress. That nexus lies at hand in the great conceptions of Jesus, the fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Man. But these conceptions must be the genuine article. There must be no place in them for pride and privilege; for particularism and its inordinate claims to material reward; for nationalism or imperialism in the generally accepted sense of these terms; for the struggles of competitive individuals or societies; above all for the heinous crime of War.

Only by ignoring the material values which cause these things may the followers of Jesus find a way out of the present *impasse* in world society. God must be so really their Father that they will count the world well lost to do His work. The Brotherhood of Man must be no longer merely a beautiful ideal, but a *perfectly feasible basis of society*, to realize which price is not to be considered. There is no bar to such a

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metamorphosis of human society but our own dogma-enslaved, fear-filled, materially-blinded minds. Something big is on its way for the world in these days, if one may judge from the signs of the times. It is for us to determine whether it will be good as well as big, constructive instead of destructive, evolutionary instead of revolutionary, permanent instead of transitory.

“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.” Is our faith real enough to trust this, even though the way to our inheritance lies through present privation, suffering, and sacrifice? Now, then, or never, let us make answer. For lo! the acceptable year of the Lord is upon us.

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5

ON THE SAVIOURHOOD OF THE ELDER BROTHER

1. For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say.—LUKE 6: 43-46.

2. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

Because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty them that are bruised,

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened upon him. And he began to say unto them, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"—LUKE 4: 16-22.

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3. And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John.

And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them.

But it is not so among you; but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.

For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—MARK 10: 41-45.

4. And he began to speak unto them (the chief priests, the scribes and the elders) in parables.

"A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the wine-press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty.

And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some and killing some.

He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, "They will reverence my son." But those husbandmen said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours!" And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard.

What therefore will the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Have ye not read even this scripture:

The stone which the builders rejected,
The same was made the head of the corner:
This was from the Lord,
And it was marvellous in our eyes?

—MARK 12: 1-11.

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HAVING observed how radically different were the conceptions of Jesus regarding the nature of Man, of God, and of the relationship between them, from the current opinions of His day, we are not surprised that He should have found the dominant elements of Jewish society utterly unwilling to accept Him at His own valuation. In the thought of Jewish legalism there was no place for a personal, immediately inspired ministry of reconciliation such as He attempted.

One realizes that in touching upon the theme of the work of Jesus one enters the most controversial phase of Christian theology. Yet since our business is not to propound a system of theology or to offer a Christology, but to discover a working faith, it may be possible to say what we have to say without great offense to any one.

After all, a working faith is the prime necessity. For if we could enter into real fellowship with Jesus, if we could discover a motive strong enough to vitalize our will power, and to impel us into living His life, we should find our theological and Christological differences of opinion vanishing like the mists of the morning before the rising sun. The dictum of the Church "*Credo ut intellegam*,"* a dictum which is a bulwark of

*I believe in order that I may know. (Anselm.)

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all authoritative Christian systems, is after all only a half truth. To say that we must believe before we can know is true, as any scientist knows. But it is equally true that we must know before we can believe. A man who knows little about, let us say, the science of physics is never likely to find his mind suddenly thrilled by the immediate conviction of some greater law of that science, which as yet he has not proved.

Similarly a man who *knows* nothing about Jesus is not very likely to *believe* anything right about Him. For centuries men have been asked to accept authoritative dogmas about the person and work of Christ, and have been assured that their acceptance would lead to deeper knowledge of Jesus and greater power to live His life. The emptiness of those assurances finds proof in the present impotency of all branches of the Christian Church to deal with the moral problems growing out of the order they have participated in producing. Consequently one is not afraid to enter even the Christological field through the door of knowledge of the authentic ideas and actions of Jesus. For not belief, nor opinion, but fact, is the door to the higher levels of faith.

Christianity has long declared Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. And yet the

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world has not been saved. Indeed, at the present moment, it seems all but lost. Nor can Christianity adopt the obvious loophole of escape from responsibility for the situation, namely, by blaming it upon the refusal of men to follow the Church's lead. For hundreds of years now, the Church, in some form, has had access to those who have ruled the world, and has had opportunity to present to them her conception of the Christian view of the world. The Great War, fought between Christian nations, and all the sickening train of strifes and jealousies which have followed upon it, are either in great part due to the influence of the Church, or else the Church has been a very much greater nonentity in Christendom than she has ever been willing to confess. It is childish of the Church to claim credit for everything good in the present order and disclaim responsibility for everything bad. It is useless also, for most men can see through a "heads I'm right, tails you're wrong" proposition. When Christendom totters Christianity should not even think of trying to evade its share of the responsibility.

The attempt of upholders of traditional systems of Christianity to lay the present difficulties of religion to the charge of the "New Theology" is even more ridiculous.

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The conditions of to-day did not grow up over-night, nor are they the work of the mere handful who hitherto have ventured to question traditional "fundamentals." Organized religion does not falter and hesitate as it does to-day because it has lost the support of the modernists. It does so rather because it has lost the confidence of hundreds of thousands of hard-headed, clear-thinking, earnest men and women who have observed the yawning chasm between its preaching and its practising, the great gulf that lies between the dominant social principles of Christendom and justice, mercy and truth.

At this point let us look for a moment at the first of the passages before us. There is something there surely to give us pause for thought. For here is the test of religion, the test which Jesus applied, which the unchurched masses apply, which we must apply, if we are to be saved ourselves, let alone contribute to the salvation of others. "Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." Not belief is the test, but action. Not root, nor trunk, nor leaf—but fruit. What avails our loud proclamation of the divinity of Jesus, if we do not the things He did, if we live not by the principles which also governed Him? It is not the title we give Him that

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makes Him Lord, Saviour, Christ, Messiah, Son of God. He is what He is in His own right, and that is a question we can defer for settlement, while we busy ourselves with following in His steps. If we do this we shall soon find out who He is; otherwise we never shall. All the flights of philosophy, all the intricate arguments of theology will never settle the controversies they have raised about the person of Jesus. But by projecting Him through our actions into human life we shall very speedily learn all we need to know about His person.

In the same manner ecclesiasticism and dogmatism, authoritative insistence on "belief," continually obscure for men the Saviourhood of Jesus, the nature of the work He came to do. All Christendom to-day, rich and poor alike, asks the question, "What must I *do* to be saved?" Not what must I think or believe, but what must I do, and how am I to do it? For that reason men are not interested when we tell them merely what they must believe. For that reason exponents of Christianity, in all contacts with morally earnest individuals, are forever being asked disconcerting questions like these: "From what or from whom does Jesus save us?" and "How does Jesus save us?"

Let us take up the first of these ques-

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tions. One knows how traditional theology has answered and does now answer it. He saves us from the just wrath of God. He shelters us from the anger of the divine "*Father*" whose laws we have disobeyed. The Cross, we are told, is at once the symbol of the Divine Love and the Divine Hate. His love for us, His hatred of our sins. It stands at the same time as the sign of His forgiveness and His avenging wrath. This is a strange, incomprehensible tangle, is it not? He loves. He hates. He forgives. He punishes. How, then, is it possible to distinguish between us and our sins? Our sins are *we*, are they not—the outward expression of what we inwardly *are*? Well, then, let us be done with this muddle, dignified by the name of "mystery." Let us see if Jesus has anything clearer to tell us about the nature of His work for us. Let us go back to His life and teaching and see if we can get some light on the "mystery" of the Cross.

In the second and third passages above quoted we find two statements of Jesus on the nature of His work. The first was made at the beginning of His career, as the text of His first sermon, preached in the village of Nazareth. The second was made as He neared Jerusalem on the journey that ended

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in His crucifixion. In both these utterances there rings clear the note of liberation. He came to save men, to set them free. It is plain that Saviourhood is His own conception of His function.

Yet, let it be observed, there is no hint here nor elsewhere in His admittedly authentic utterances of a Godward side to His mission. His work is done with the idea of changing the attitude of man to God, never that of God to Man. Such a thought would have been incongruous in His mind. To him God was the perfect, Divine Father. There was no need, even if such a thing were possible, of altering His mind toward His children in any way.

Now here we find essential antipathy between the mind of Jesus and the prevailing mind of His age. His mind was prophetic. The mind of His age was priestly and legalistic. Jesus thought of reconciliation as a process whose end was the changing of Man's attitude to God. His opponents thought of it as a process which was directed toward the changing of God's attitude to Man. Jesus felt that His work lay in bringing men to know God. His rivals felt that their work lay in inducing God to recognize men. Jesus believed in free forgiveness of sin through God's grace. The

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legalists and priests believed in purchased forgiveness of sin through the means of external rites and laws of conduct. Jesus felt that Man must be *saved from himself* through a shifting to new inner motives of faith and love and hope. His critics felt that Man must be saved from God's just wrath through outward coercion.

The tragedy is that Christianity has carried over both of these conceptions in a confused and cumbersome eclecticism, whose elements cannot be harmonized. In this theological jumble the priestly legal elements have ever been predominant. Christianity is, and has been, almost from the very beginning, more Jewish than Christian. Hence this eternal difficulty over the work of Jesus, the nature of the atonement or reconciliation which He wrought. We have tried to combine two mutually exclusive viewpoints. We have endeavored to present God at one and the same time as Father and Judge. We have tried to make men simultaneously *trust* his love and *fear* his wrath.

Our confusion about the nature of His work has naturally resulted in confusion about the method of it, and about the status of Jesus in relation to it. Men ask us how Jesus saves us. We cannot answer coherently because we are confused by two

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mutually exclusive conceptions of His method and status. On one side of our minds we think of Him sacramentally, as an objective "sacrifice" offered for the placation of God; or we think of Him as a priest through whom God may be approached. Thus thought of, He becomes the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," the "Great High Priest" who maketh propitiation for our sins. On the other side of our minds we think of Him morally, as the revealer of truth, the stimulus to righteousness. Thus thought of, He becomes "The Great Example," "The Light of the World," "The Way, and the Truth, and the Life," "The Good Shepherd," "The Vine," "The Teacher," "The Great Physician."

We have always *assumed* that these conceptions are complementary. Have we any right to *assume* anything on a so vitally important question? Let us go back for a moment into the history of Old Testament religion and examine the record of the relation between prophecy and priestcraft. May one quote a very discerning modern writer on this point? "The Jewish priest may be defined as the (*ceremonially*) holy person through whom *God is approached* in the divinely prescribed way. As such he forms *the direct contrast* to the prophet who is the

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(*morally*) holy person through whom *God approaches man.*"* Old Testament literature records a ceaseless battle between priest and prophet, between the ceremonial and the moral conceptions of God and of Man's relation to God. The ceremonial or priestly-legal conceptions rest mainly on fear. The moral or prophetic conceptions rest mainly on faith. Who can fail to see the essential enmity between the two? Who can forget that the silencing of the prophet always followed the triumph of the priest? Who does not know that progress and development in society came through the prophet—in spite of the priest?

One must, however, qualify the repudiation of priestcraft, legalism and ecclesiasticism, so as to do no injustice to thousands of true servants of God who, while trained to function in these channels and think in these terms, have yet achieved a morally inspiring and soul-saving ministry. He would be a bigot indeed who would fail to admit that many an ecclesiastic, while daily performing the formal actions of his cultus, while still proclaiming by those actions the belief that salvation comes through external channels, has yet, in his own life, achieved moral

*H. W. Robinson: "Religious Ideas of the Old Testament," p. 141. The italics are the writer's.

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transformation and communicated the same to others. For one who knows the history of Jewish and Christian religion it is not hard to understand why so many true followers of Jesus think of his person and work and expound them to others in sacerdotal or legalistic terminology. So Paul, for example, describes the life of the redeemed in sacerdotal language in the famous passage, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The life of those who have been redeemed by Jesus is properly described as a "*living sacrifice*," in the sense that it is devoted, of its own volition, to the service of God even unto death—if death be necessary. Hence it is not only redeemed but redemptive. Its function is to recreate itself. It is not a life whose status only is changed. It is a life the character of which is transformed, and when it is genuine it will communicate the same transformation of character to others. But its merits may never, either in any external or intrinsic manner, be extended to others. Paul is, then, expressing the moral view of salvation in sacerdotal terminology, which, in view of his training, is by no means surprising.

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The sharp antithesis which we have drawn between the priestly, legal, ecclesiastical or ceremonial conception of salvation and the prophetic or moral idea of redemption is not inspired by bigotry. Yet one feels that the time has surely arrived when Christian teachers must choose which of two mutually exclusive conceptions of salvation they will accept; and further that they must make the choice so decisively as to free themselves, not only from the rejected conception itself, but also from the modes of thought and expression which have been for ages associated with it.

How, then, does Jesus save us? Since we cannot combine both views, which shall we choose? Shall we think of Him sacramentally? If so let us go the whole way. If His task was to placate God; if He achieved it by becoming a sacrifice for us; if our salvation is achieved by "His blood"—then surely there is an end of the matter. If we think of His work and methods and status in this way at all, then there is no half-way, straddle-the-fence position. Let us go to Rome. A good place to go, indeed, from many stand-points. But let us remember, before we go, that sacramentarianism has never been able to achieve the moral phase of salvation. Sacramental righteousness may be assumed

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to alter the status of the beneficiary. But experience and fact prove that it does not necessarily alter his inherent nature. Imputed righteousness is not moral righteousness. It is extrinsic, not intrinsic. And priestcraft, of whatever ecclesiastical pattern, has never been able to satisfy Man's inborn need of genuine moral righteousness. Let us also remember that if we travel in this direction we diverge from the course of Jesus. Jesus broke absolutely with Jewish priestcraft and legalism at this point. His view of His work, His method and His status was in line with the moral view of the prophet.

For this last statement we must offer some proof. Let us submit His parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, above cited. No more concise and illuminating statement of the religious history of Israel could be found than this parable. The vineyard is Israel. Its founder and rightful owner is God. The husbandmen to whom the care of the vineyard was entrusted are the priests and ruling classes who, from time immemorial, have controlled and exploited the vineyard. But how, and with what end in view? That the real owner should derive aught of pleasure or profit from it? Not so! But that they might establish *themselves* in the control of

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its resources. That is an arraignment of the Jewish Church which might well arouse the implacable hatred of those who stood sponsor for it—an arraignment uttered, let us remember, to the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. If this parable means anything, it means that priestcraft and ecclesiasticism stand condemned from the mouth of Jesus Himself.

But the owner was not content to leave the husbandmen in undisputed possession. From time to time he sent servants to remind them of their relationship to the owner, of their moral obligations to him. These are the prophets. But the prophets are rebuffed, wounded, slain. Their message goes unheeded. Prophecy has never been compatible with priestcraft and ecclesiasticism. And now comes one to do the thing which the prophets failed to do. He is not a servant. He is more than a prophet. He has a different relationship to God. He is a Son. This is Jesus. He comes, conscious of His Sonship, to awaken the wicked husbandmen, the self-willed priest, pharisee, scribe, elder, to the moral heinousness of their conduct. He comes to reconcile them to His Father. He meets, however, the same fate. Yet even in His defeat and death He will bring about the downfall of those who maltreated Him and defied His Father.

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So does Jesus announce the ultimate failure of priestcraft and ecclesiasticism—a failure that is upon us to-day. So does He declare Himself, though more than a prophet, yet in line with and carrying on to triumphant completion the work they tried and failed to do. A moral order is to come at last into its own. The vineyard is to pass from the control of those whose righteousness is extrinsic to those whose righteousness is intrinsic.

Here also, we note, Jesus is to do His work not merely by His death, but also by His life. His death is inflicted upon Him. His acquiescence in it springs from His faithfulness to His task. His death is redemptive, not because it is death, but because it is in line with the great purpose of His life. He will win back the vineyard, not because He died, but because death was no sufficient obstacle to the pursuit of His aim in life. There is no room in the parable for the sacramentarian's conception of the methods by which Jesus was to do His work. His Father sent Him not that He might be slain, for He sent Him believing, "they will reverence my son." He sent Him to be the bearer of a moral appeal. And He performed His work unflinchingly, triumphantly.

Well then, how does Jesus save us? By

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bringing us the revelation of God the Father; by assuring us of God's love and forgiveness on the admission of our sins; by offering us a new relationship of Sonship, bearing with it the joy of conscious fellowship with God; by showing us what Sonship involves, the nature of its conditions, the surety of its rewards, present and ultimate. And lastly, by providing the motive power of faith and love whereby our will power may be revived, and our new opportunities accepted and held.

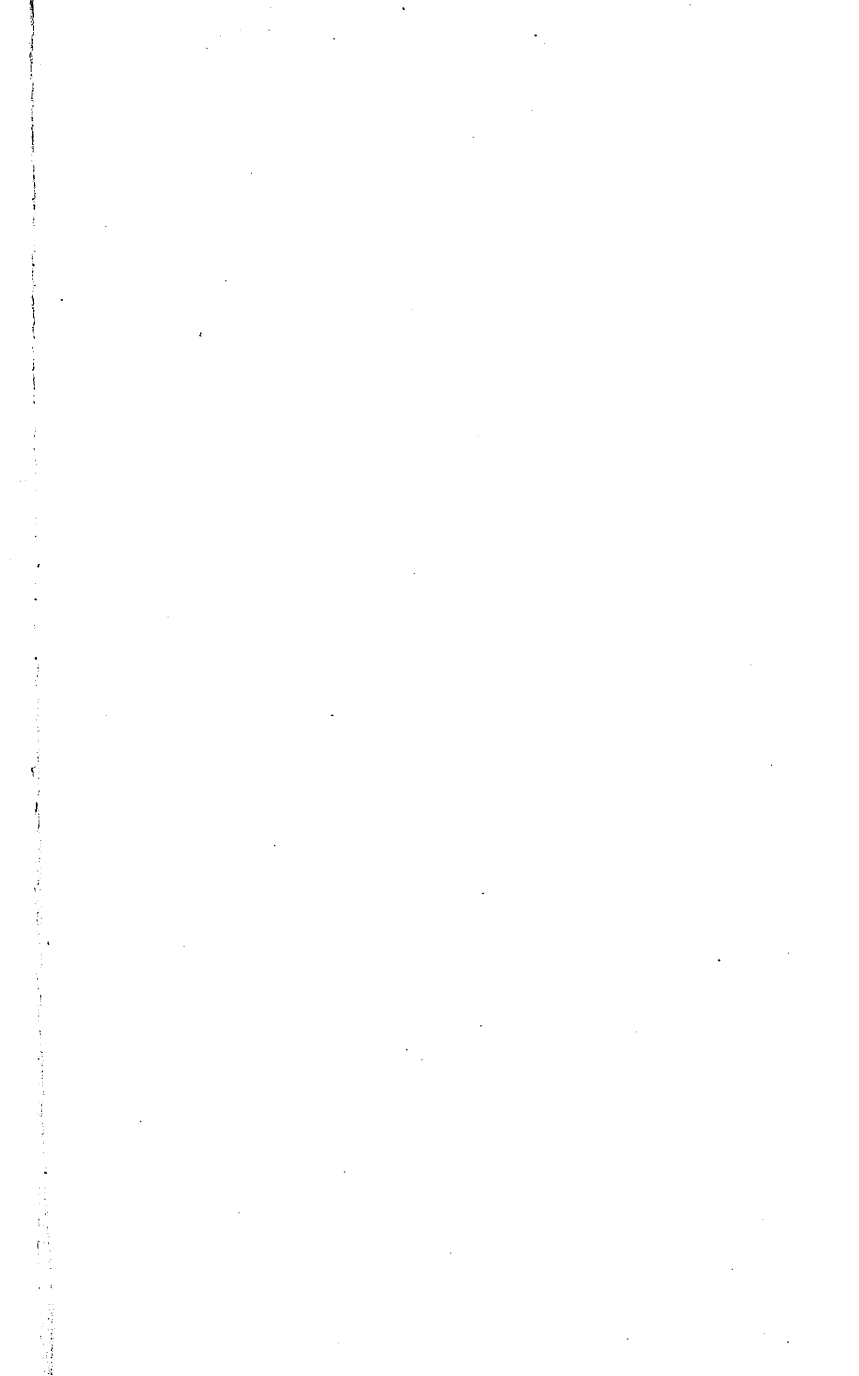
Jesus Himself becomes that needed stimulus to our will power. The Cross reveals Him as the firstborn and best beloved of many brethren. His status is that of true Elder Brother. He was, He is, one of us. His sonship differs from that into which He leads us in degree only, not in kind. The privileges of sonship are open to all who are redeemed from servitude. But none are redeemed who do not live, with increasing faithfulness, the redemptive life. The true family of God grows as the inner motives and aims of men are adjusted to Him in the relationship of Sonship, and their outer actions adjusted to those of other men in the relationship of Brotherhood.

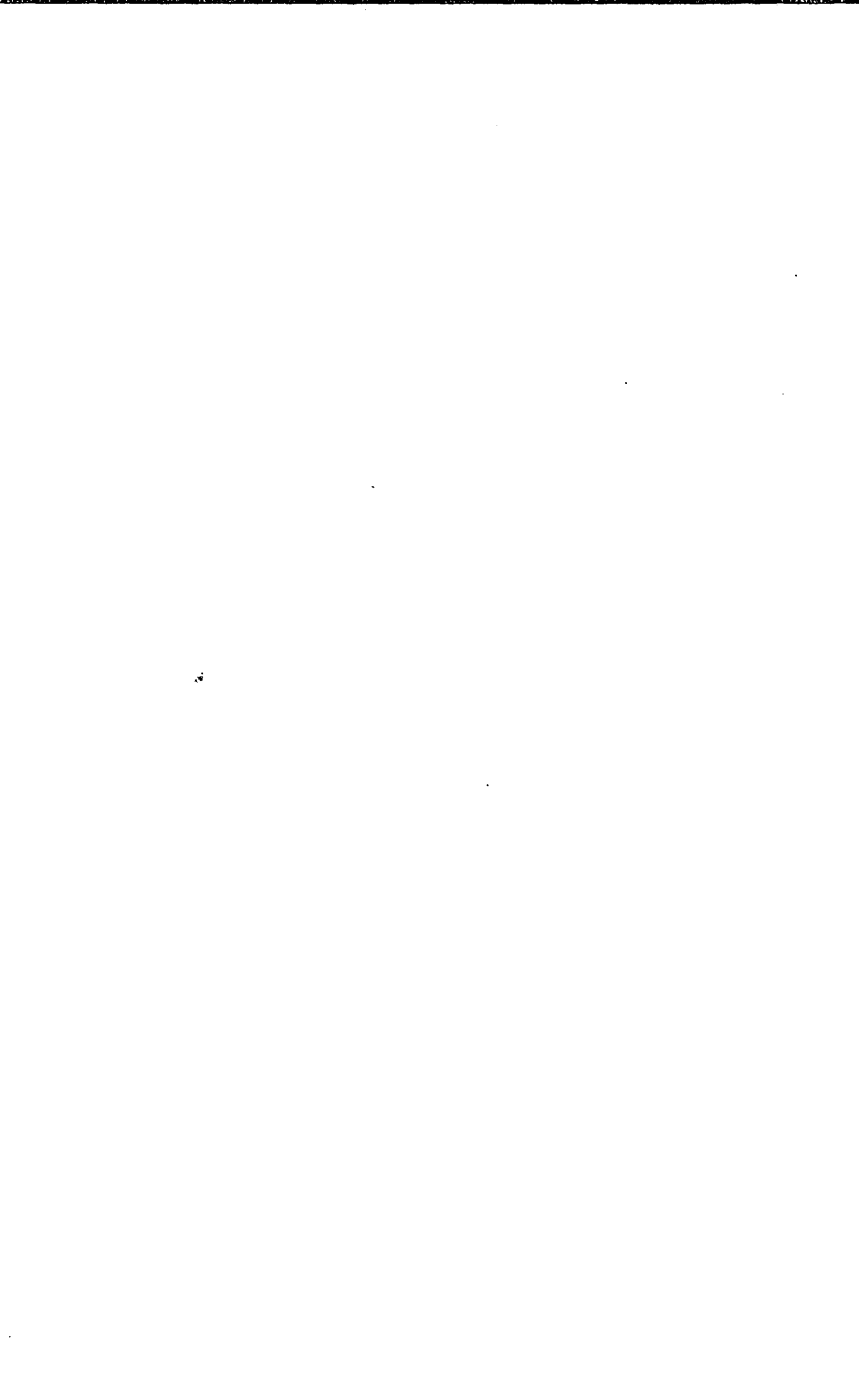
And so, at last, we must all return to the Cross, not only to the Cross of Jesus, but to

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the Cross which awaits every man who would join the fellowship of the redeemed and the redeeming, the brotherhood of the Man of Nazareth who was and is, in every real and vital sense, the first-born Son of God and the Elder Brother of all who will *be* His brethren. Son! Elder Brother! What high-sounding title, bestowed on Him by the extravagant and involuntarily condescending adulation of men, can equal in significance what these words convey? The peak of moral grandeur in all relationships, human and divine, is attained in the conceptions these words imply. The goal of life, eternal, indestructible, invincible life, lies in the relationships these words offer. And he to whom they have no transforming, ennobling and saving appeal; he in whom they cannot evoke a living flame of love for the Saving Elder Brother; he in whom they are powerless to arouse a sense of personal and social sin and a mighty will to free himself and society from the present grip of that sin—such a man, be he prince or peasant, prelate or pariah, walks even now in that outer darkness whither fare lost souls who despise the mercy and love of the Father.

THE END





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